

## The Most Defiant Devil: William Temple Hornaday and His Controversial Crusade to Save American Wildlife

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*The Most Defiant Devil: William Temple Hornaday and His Controversial Crusade to Save American Wildlife*, by Gregory J. Dehler. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013. viii, 254 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer James A. Pritchard is adjunct assistant professor of natural resource ecology and management at Iowa State University. An environmental historian, he specializes in the history of national parks and the history of wildlife conservation and wildlife science.

William Temple Hornaday flamboyantly engaged in what he viewed as a “life-and-death battle for the very soul of wildlife protection” during the Progressive Era (120). Historian Gregory Dehler’s excellent biography elucidates the fascinating career of Hornaday, one of several midwesterners to play a national role in conservation.

Studying under biologist Charles Bessey at the Iowa Agricultural College in Ames, Hornaday found his calling as a museum curator and taxidermist, his “quest for realism” fundamentally changing exhibitions (50). Employed by Henry Ward’s Natural History Establishment, Hornaday traveled to South America, Africa, and Asia collecting specimens. After continuing as a taxidermist at the National Museum, he served 30 years as director of the New York Zoological Park.

Fearing imminent extinction of the American bison, in 1886 Hornaday traveled to Montana to collect a family group for the National Museum, which he justified on scientific and educational grounds. In his view, millions of visitors to natural history museums would learn about wildlife, gaining an appreciation for conservation. Hornaday never regretted gathering and displaying specimens, even after adopting the view that overhunting had decimated wildlife. In a 1931 letter to Rosalie Edge, Hornaday wrote, “I am not a repentant sinner in regard to my previous career as a killer and preserver of wild animals, but I am positively the most defiant devil that ever came to town” (187).

Hornaday later blamed sportsmen (and public apathy) for wildlife depletion, perceiving a *de facto* conspiracy among hunters, the firearms industry, stodgy conservation organizations, and agency scientists, whom he included in the “Regular Army of Destruction” (128). His vociferous campaigns to shape protective legislation created friction with the board of the New York Zoological Society. Dehler clarifies political factions as Congress debated pelagic sealing, firearm limitations, shooting grounds on refuges, and bag limits, from the Weeks-McLean Act of 1913 to the “Duck Stamp Act” of 1934. Hunters, never understanding Hornaday’s connection with a broad public audience, thought of him as a sentimental preservationist. A particular strength of Dehler’s account is its clear stage-setting of policy actors and their relationships, including

T. Gilbert Pearson (Audubon Societies), Will Dilg (Izaak Walton League), and many others.

The author forthrightly examines Hornaday's limitations, including his prejudices relating to race and ethnicity. Hornaday's prickly personality produced abrasive relationships as he "argued vehemently" over precise details of conservation tactics and strategy (159). Brought up as an Adventist in Iowa, Hornaday tended to see issues as moral absolutes, adopt unrelenting positions, and perceive opposition in personal terms. Offending some conservation leaders, Hornaday, with his "fiery, confrontational style, unbending moralism, and eagerness to challenge conservation organizations," nonetheless effectively focused public attention on critical issues (182). By the 1930s, conservationists, tired of internecine warfare, sought to heal rifts in the movement.

Dehler succinctly assesses Hornaday's legacy. Millions toured the New York Zoological Park during his tenure. The author argues that Aldo Leopold and others adapted parts of Hornaday's outlook on moral responsibility. Hornaday's positions indelibly shaped legislation, including the notion that wildlife refuges were not established exclusively for hunters. Ideas he debated on a national stage shaped refuges and conditions for migratory wildlife throughout the Midwest. Most significantly, Hornaday "expanded the scope of animals that deserved protection" beyond economically valuable game species toward a more general concept of wildlife, a harbinger of later endangered species protection (201). In 1929, Hornaday returned to the Ames campus to witness the unveiling of a plaque commemorating his contributions.

*The Most Defiant Devil* is exhaustively researched, engagingly written, and well integrated with memoirs and other histories. This outstanding biography provides perceptive insights into Hornaday's motivations and his dynamic role.

*Pure and Modern Milk: An Environmental History since 1900*, by Kendra Smith-Howard. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. x, 229 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Maureen Ogle is an independent historian. She is the author of *In Meat We Trust: An Unexpected History of Carnivore America* (2013) and *Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer* (2006).

If ever there was a moment for historians to move agricultural history out of its ghetto and into the history mainstream, surely this is it. In recent years, the Pollanesque crusade to "save" family farms and to eat small/local/organic has shoved to center stage a long-standing but decidedly fringe crusade to reform the nation's food system. The campaign